

The Wrath of God

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INTRODUCTION

Holding a schizophrenic view of deity, many consider the God of the Old Testament as One of wrath, while He who is revealed in the New Testament is a God of love. Reality is more complex than the cartoon-cutout conceptions of men. Jehovah, the Creator of heaven and earth, the Lord God revealed in the Hebrew and Christian Scripture, is holy, exalted, unchanging, a perfect blending of love and longsuffering, wrath and retribution, goodness and grace, virtue and vengeance, etc.

Interestingly, while the Old Testament refers to God's wrath, and contains many examples of its outpouring, "the wrath of God" is a phrase found only in the New Testament, at least in the NASB (John 3:36; Rom. 1:18; 5:9; 12:19; Eph. 5:6; Col. 3:6; Rev. 14:10; 14:19; 15:1, 7; 16:1).

*John 3:36 (NASB95) — 36 "He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but **the wrath of God** abides on him."*

*Romans 1:18 (NASB95) — 18 For **the wrath of God** is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness,*

*Romans 5:9 (NASB95) — 9 Much more then, having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from **the wrath of God** through Him.*

*Romans 12:19 (NASB95) — 19 Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for **the wrath of God**, for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord.*

*Ephesians 5:6 (NASB95) — 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things **the wrath of God** comes upon the sons of disobedience.*

*Colossians 3:6 (NASB95) — 6 For it is because of these things that **the wrath of God** will come upon the sons of disobedience,*

*Revelation 14:10 (NASB95) — 10 he also will drink of the wine of **the wrath of God**, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.*

*Revelation 14:19 (NASB95) — 19 So the angel swung his sickle to the earth and gathered the clusters from the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of **the wrath of God**.*

*Revelation 15:1 (NASB95) — 1 Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels who had seven plagues, which are the last, because in them **the wrath of God** is finished.*

*Revelation 15:7 (NASB95) — 7 Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of **the wrath of God**, who lives forever and ever.*

*Revelation 16:1 (NASB95) — 1 Then I heard a loud voice from the temple, saying to the seven angels, “Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of **the wrath of God**.”*

What is the meaning of “wrath”? The Greek word *orgē* refers to “(1) a state of relatively strong displeasure, with focus on the emotional aspect, *anger*; (2) strong indignation directed at wrongdoing, with focus on retribution, *wrath*” [BDAG]. Translated “anger” or “wrath” in the NASB, it is used of man’s impulsive anger, often imperfectly expressed and thus perilous (James 1:19-20), or God’s righteous judgments upon sins, perfectly expressed in the past, present and future (Rom. 2:5-11).

*James 1:19-20 (NASB95) — 19 This you know, my beloved brethren. But everyone must be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to ***anger**; 20 for the ***anger** of man does not achieve the righteousness of God.*

*Romans 2:5-11 (NASB95) — 5 But because of your stubbornness and unrepentant heart you are storing up ***wrath** for yourself in the day of ***wrath** and revelation of the righteous judgment of God, 6 who will render to each person according to his deeds: 7 to those who by perseverance in doing good seek for glory and honor and immortality, eternal life; 8 but to those who are selfishly ambitious and do not obey the truth, but obey unrighteousness, ***wrath** and indignation. 9 There will be tribulation and distress for every soul of man who does evil, of the Jew first and also of the Greek, 10 but glory and honor and peace to everyone who does good, to the Jew first and also to the Greek. 11 For there is no partiality with God.*

The Lord God wants what is best for mankind; our adversary, the devil, desires the exact opposite. Adam and Eve transgressed God’s commandment, resulting in pain in work/labor (Gen. 3:17-19), pain in childbirth (Gen. 3:16), pain in sickness and death (Gen. 2:17; 3:3, 19, 24). Being a violation of God’s purpose and pattern for mankind, sin carries adverse consequences (1 John 3:4). Those who sow the wind reap the whirlwind (Hos. 8:7; cf. Prov. 22:8).

Genesis 3:17-19 (NASB95) — 17 Then to Adam He said, “Because you have listened to the voice of your wife, and have eaten from the tree about which I commanded you, saying, ‘You shall not eat from it’; Cursed is the ground because of you; In toil you will

eat of it All the days of your life. 18 “Both thorns and thistles it shall grow for you; And you will eat the plants of the field; 19 By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return.”

Genesis 3:16 (NASB95) — 16 To the woman He said, “I will greatly multiply Your pain in childbirth, In pain you will bring forth children; Yet your desire will be for your husband, And he will rule over you.”

Genesis 2:17 (NASB95) — 17 but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die.”

Genesis 3:3 (NASB95) — 3 but from the fruit of the tree which is in the middle of the garden, God has said, ‘You shall not eat from it or touch it, or you will die.’ “

Genesis 3:19 (NASB95) — 19 By the sweat of your face You will eat bread, Till you return to the ground, Because from it you were taken; For you are dust, And to dust you shall return.”

Genesis 3:24 (NASB95) — 24 So He drove the man out; and at the east of the garden of Eden He stationed the cherubim and the flaming sword which turned every direction to guard the way to the tree of life.

1 John 3:4 (NASB95) — 4 Everyone who practices sin also practices lawlessness; and sin is lawlessness.

Hosea 8:7 (NASB95) — 7 For they sow the wind And they reap the whirlwind. The standing grain has no heads; It yields no grain. Should it yield, strangers would swallow it up.

Proverbs 22:8 (NASB95) — 8 He who sows iniquity will reap vanity, And the rod of his fury will perish.

What forms of human conduct provoke the wrath of God? In this lesson, we note Jehovah’s reaction to rebellion in general, and sexual immorality in particular. Recognizing that His wrath is poured out upon individuals and nations, let us be obedient to the gospel of grace, so that we might be rescued from the wrath to come.

POURED OUT UPON FAITHLESS DISOBEDIENCE

Faithless disobedience provokes the wrath of God: “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but **the wrath of God** abides on him” (John 3:36). Many misunderstand Jesus’ earlier statement in John 3:16 as an affirmation of the

efficacy of faith only. However, the aforementioned statement, along with the surrounding context, demonstrates the fallacy of such thinking (John 3:14-21).

*John 3:36 (NASB95) — 36 “He who believes in the Son has eternal life; but he who does not obey the Son will not see life, but **the wrath of God** abides on him.”*

John 3:14-21 (NASB95) — 14 “As Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, even so must the Son of Man be lifted up; 15 so that whoever believes will in Him have eternal life. 16 “For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life. 17 “For God did not send the Son into the world to judge the world, but that the world might be saved through Him. 18 “He who believes in Him is not judged; he who does not believe has been judged already, because he has not believed in the name of the only begotten Son of God. 19 “This is the judgment, that the Light has come into the world, and men loved the darkness rather than the Light, for their deeds were evil. 20 “For everyone who does evil hates the Light, and does not come to the Light for fear that his deeds will be exposed. 21 “But he who practices the truth comes to the Light, so that his deeds may be manifested as having been wrought in God.”

POURED OUT UPON SEXUAL IMMORALITY

Fornication in General

Having adopted a hedonistic mentality, many today live for pleasure, with sexual fulfillment being paramount. As a result, our culture is becoming more decadent, debased and debauched. However, sexual immorality (in all its various manifestations) provokes God’s wrath (Eph. 5:3-12, esp. vs. 6; Col. 3:5-11, esp. vs. 6).

*Ephesians 5:3-12 (NASB95) — 3 But immorality or any impurity or greed must not even be named among you, as is proper among saints; 4 and there must be no filthiness and silly talk, or coarse jesting, which are not fitting, but rather giving of thanks. 5 For this you know with certainty, that no immoral or impure person or covetous man, who is an idolater, has an inheritance in the kingdom of Christ and God. 6 Let no one deceive you with empty words, for because of these things **the wrath of God** comes upon the sons of disobedience. 7 Therefore do not be partakers with them; 8 for you were formerly darkness, but now you are Light in the Lord; walk as children of Light 9 (for the fruit of the Light consists in all goodness and righteousness and truth), 10 trying to learn what is pleasing to the Lord. 11 Do not participate in the unfruitful deeds of darkness, but instead even expose them; 12 for it is disgraceful even to speak of the things which are done by them in secret.*

*Colossians 3:5-11 (NASB95) — 5 Therefore consider the members of your earthly body as dead to immorality, impurity, passion, evil desire, and greed, which amounts to idolatry. 6 For it is because of these things that **the wrath of God** will come upon the sons of*

disobedience, 7 and in them you also once walked, when you were living in them. 8 But now you also, put them all aside: anger, wrath, malice, slander, and abusive speech from your mouth. 9 Do not lie to one another, since you laid aside the old self with its evil practices, 10 and have put on the new self who is being renewed to a true knowledge according to the image of the One who created him— 11 a renewal in which there is no distinction between Greek and Jew, circumcised and uncircumcised, barbarian, Scythian, slave and freeman, but Christ is all, and in all.

Homosexuality in Particular

Affirming the universality of sin, Paul focuses on the Gentiles, then the Jews, and finally concludes, “All have sinned and come short of the glory of God.” In discussing the fallen state of the Gentiles, Paul says, “For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness...” (Rom. 1:18). He then catalogues man’s sinful provocations, beginning with the practice of homosexuality and lesbianism (Rom. 1:18-32, esp. vs. 18, 24-27).

Romans 1:18-32 (NASB95) — 18 For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men who suppress the truth in unrighteousness, 19 because that which is known about God is evident within them; for God made it evident to them. 20 For since the creation of the world His invisible attributes, His eternal power and divine nature, have been clearly seen, being understood through what has been made, so that they are without excuse. 21 For even though they knew God, they did not honor Him as God or give thanks, but they became futile in their speculations, and their foolish heart was darkened. 22 Professing to be wise, they became fools, 23 and exchanged the glory of the incorruptible God for an image in the form of corruptible man and of birds and four-footed animals and crawling creatures. 24 Therefore God gave them over in the lusts of their hearts to impurity, so that their bodies would be dishonored among them. 25 For they exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served the creature rather than the Creator, who is blessed forever. Amen. 26 For this reason God gave them over to degrading passions; for their women exchanged the natural function for that which is unnatural, 27 and in the same way also the men abandoned the natural function of the woman and burned in their desire toward one another, men with men committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error. 28 And just as they did not see fit to acknowledge God any longer, God gave them over to a depraved mind, to do those things which are not proper, 29 being filled with all unrighteousness, wickedness, greed, evil; full of envy, murder, strife, deceit, malice; they are gossips, 30 slanderers, haters of God, insolent, arrogant, boastful, inventors of evil, disobedient to parents, 31 without understanding, untrustworthy, unloving, unmerciful; 32 and although they know the ordinance of God, that those who practice such things are worthy of death, they not only do the same, but also give hearty approval to those who practice them.

Why does homosexuality provoke the wrath of God? It violates God's provision for human companionship and procreation (Gen. 2:18-24). It removes sexuality from its proper sphere (i.e., the God-ordained relationship of a man and woman, who are joined in a mutually beneficial, life-long union). When robbed of its sacredness, sex becomes nothing more than animalistic desire. Furthermore, homosexuality and lesbianism are "against nature," ignoring the essential differences/distinctions between men and women, demonstrating confusion regarding roles and relationships. Exchanging the natural function of the opposite gender, such individuals burn with desire for members of their own sex, committing indecent acts and receiving in their own persons the due penalty of their error (Rom. 1:24-27).

Genesis 2:18-24 (NASB95) — 18 Then the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him." 19 Out of the ground the Lord God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the sky, and brought them to the man to see what he would call them; and whatever the man called a living creature, that was its name. 20 The man gave names to all the cattle, and to the birds of the sky, and to every beast of the field, but for Adam there was not found a helper suitable for him. 21 So the Lord God caused a deep sleep to fall upon the man, and he slept; then He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh at that place. 22 The Lord God fashioned into a woman the rib which He had taken from the man, and brought her to the man. 23 The man said, "This is now bone of my bones, And flesh of my flesh; She shall be called Woman, Because she was taken out of Man." 24 For this reason a man shall leave his father and his mother, and be joined to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.

Paul included homosexuality in a list of sins that carry spiritually devastating consequences (1 Cor. 6:9-11). The Corinthians were converted to Christ from a corrupt culture. While their past lives may have been marred by such shameful conduct, through obedience to the gospel, they were washed (i.e. baptized for the remission of sins), sanctified (set apart from their former sinful lifestyle through repentance and spiritual renewal), and thus justified (counted as righteous because they are now living in harmony with the will of God).

1 Corinthians 6:9-11 (NASB95) — 9 Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor homosexuals, 10 nor thieves, nor the covetous, nor drunkards, nor revilers, nor swindlers, will inherit the kingdom of God. 11 Such were some of you; but you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and in the Spirit of our God.

Addressing Timothy, Paul affirms that homosexuality (along with other base behavior) is contrary to sound teaching that accords with the glorious gospel of our blessed God (1 Tim. 1:8-11). Discussing the characteristic conduct of sinful men (those who are lawless and rebellious, ungodly and sinners, unholy and profane), the apostle groups together as one those who commit murder (including patricide), those who are sexually immoral (including homosexuality), those who are kidnappers, and those who are liars and perjurers.

1 Timothy 1:8-11 (NASB95) — 8 But we know that the Law is good, if one uses it lawfully, 9 realizing the fact that law is not made for a righteous person, but for those who are lawless and rebellious, for the ungodly and sinners, for the unholy and profane, for those who kill their fathers or mothers, for murderers 10 and immoral men and homosexuals and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching, 11 according to the glorious gospel of the blessed God, with which I have been entrusted.

What possible connection do these disparate actions have in common? They are all harmful. They are all selfish. They are all destructive. To commit murder, one would have to override the conscience on many levels. This is especially true for those who kill their fathers or mothers. To become a kidnapper, one must evidence extreme callousness to the sufferings he brings upon the victim and their families. So also with the practice of sexual perversion: one must ignore God's pattern of creation, His provision for companionship, the physical laws governing nature and the spiritual laws governing the heart, mind and soul.

Lest there be any doubt as to Paul's meaning, note the definition of the Greek word that occurs in both of the aforementioned passages: *arsenokoitēs*, translated "homosexuals," is a compound of *arsēn* [male] and *koitē* [a bed], and refers to "a sodomite" [Thomas 733a]. BDAG define it as "a male who engages in sexual activity with a person of his own sex, pederast." Louw and Nida say it refers to "a male partner in homosexual intercourse, i.e., 'homosexual' [88.280]. This word occurs 2x in the NT (1 Cor. 6:9; 1 Tim. 1:10).

*1 Corinthians 6:9 (NASB95) — 9 Or do you not know that the unrighteous will not inherit the kingdom of God? Do not be deceived; neither fornicators, nor idolaters, nor adulterers, nor effeminate, nor ***homosexuals**,*

*1 Timothy 1:10 (NASB95) — 10 and immoral men and ***homosexuals** and kidnappers and liars and perjurers, and whatever else is contrary to sound teaching,*

POURED OUT UPON CORRUPT CULTURES

The Lord God not only comes in judgment upon individuals, but His wrath is also poured out upon nations. There have been times in history when man's collective guilt was so great, that God acted decisively, destroying corrupt cultures and sin-sick societies.

The Anti-Diluvian World

In the days of Noah, God's wrath was poured out on the antediluvian world (Gen. 6). God's mercy was seen in the 120 year delay, during which Noah, a preacher of righteousness, warned the world of coming judgment, and prepared an ark for the salvation of his household (Gen. 6:3; Heb. 11:7; 1 Pet. 3:19-20; 2 Pet. 2:5). Unfortunately, the men of Noah's day did not heed

the warning or take advantage of the opportunity, and thus faced calamitous destruction (Matt. 24:36-39; Luke 17:26-27).

Genesis 6:3 (NASB95) — 3 Then the Lord said, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.”

Hebrews 11:7 (NASB95) — 7 By faith Noah, being warned by God about things not yet seen, in reverence prepared an ark for the salvation of his household, by which he condemned the world, and became an heir of the righteousness which is according to faith.

1 Peter 3:19-20 (NASB95) — 19 in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits now in prison, 20 who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through the water.

2 Peter 2:5 (NASB95) — 5 and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly;

Matthew 24:36-39 (NASB95) — 36 “But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father alone. 37 “For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah. 38 “For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, 39 and they did not understand until the flood came and took them all away; so will the coming of the Son of Man be.

Luke 17:26-27 (NASB95) — 26 “And just as it happened in the days of Noah, so it will be also in the days of the Son of Man: 27 they were eating, they were drinking, they were marrying, they were being given in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all.

The Cities of the Plain

In the days of Abraham and Lot, God’s wrath was poured out on the inhabitants of Sodom and Gomorrah (Gen. 18-19, esp. vs. 18:20). God condemned and destroyed the cities of the plain, reducing them to ashes, setting them forth as an example to those who would live ungodly lives thereafter, and follow after strange flesh (2 Pet. 2:4-10, esp. vs. 6; Jude 6-8, esp. vs. 7).

Genesis 18:20 (NASB95) — 20 And the Lord said, “The outcry of Sodom and Gomorrah is indeed great, and their sin is exceedingly grave.

2 Peter 2:4-10 (NASB95) — 4 For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment; 5 and did

*not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly; 6 and if **He condemned the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah to destruction by reducing them to ashes, having made them an example to those who would live ungodly lives thereafter;** 7 and if He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men 8 (for by what he saw and heard that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day by their lawless deeds), 9 then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment, 10 and especially those who indulge the flesh in its corrupt desires and despise authority. Daring, self-willed, they do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties,*

*Jude 6-8 (NASB95) — 6 And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day, 7 just as **Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh, are exhibited as an example in undergoing the punishment of eternal fire.** 8 Yet in the same way these men, also by dreaming, defile the flesh, and reject authority, and revile angelic majesties.*

Divine judgment was so complete that subsequent Biblical references to “Sodom and Gomorrah” signify absolute destruction, upon the cities of the plain (Gen. 19:23-29), upon Israel (Deut. 29:22-23; Amos 4:11-12; Matt. 10:14-15), upon Babylon (Isa. 13:19-22; Jer. 50:39-40), upon Edom (Jer. 49:17-18; cf. Isa. 63:1-6), etc. Since our nation is now provoking God’s anger in a similar fashion, we should heed the lessons of the past.

Deuteronomy 29:22-23 (NASB95) — 22 “Now the generation to come, your sons who rise up after you and the foreigner who comes from a distant land, when they see the plagues of the land and the diseases with which the Lord has afflicted it, will say, 23 ‘All its land is brimstone and salt, a burning waste, unsown and unproductive, and no grass grows in it, like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah, Admah and Zeboiim, which the Lord overthrew in His anger and in His wrath.’

Amos 4:11-12 (NASB95) — 11 “I overthrew you, as God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah, And you were like a firebrand snatched from a blaze; Yet you have not returned to Me,” declares the Lord. 12 “Therefore thus I will do to you, O Israel; Because I will do this to you, Prepare to meet your God, O Israel.”

Matthew 10:14-15 (NASB95) — 14 “Whoever does not receive you, nor heed your words, as you go out of that house or that city, shake the dust off your feet. 15 “Truly I say to you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah in the day of judgment than for that city.

Isaiah 13:19-22 (NASB95) — 19 And Babylon, the beauty of kingdoms, the glory of the Chaldeans' pride, Will be as when God overthrew Sodom and Gomorrah. 20 It will never be inhabited or lived in from generation to generation; Nor will the Arab pitch his tent there, Nor will shepherds make their flocks lie down there. 21 But desert creatures will lie down there, And their houses will be full of owls; Ostriches also will live there, and shaggy goats will frolic there. 22 Hyenas will howl in their fortified towers And jackals in their luxurious palaces. Her fateful time also will soon come And her days will not be prolonged.

Jeremiah 50:39-40 (NASB95) — 39 "Therefore the desert creatures will live there along with the jackals; The ostriches also will live in it, And it will never again be inhabited Or dwelt in from generation to generation. 40 "As when God overthrew Sodom And Gomorrah with its neighbors," declares the Lord, "No man will live there, Nor will any son of man reside in it.

Jeremiah 49:17-18 (NASB95) — 17 "Edom will become an object of horror; everyone who passes by it will be horrified and will hiss at all its wounds. 18 "Like the overthrow of Sodom and Gomorrah with its neighbors," says the Lord, "no one will live there, nor will a son of man reside in it.

Isaiah 63:1-6 (NASB95) — 1 Who is this who comes from Edom, With garments of glowing colors from Bozrah, This One who is majestic in His apparel, Marching in the greatness of His strength? "It is I who speak in righteousness, mighty to save." 2 Why is Your apparel red, And Your garments like the one who treads in the wine press? 3 "I have trodden the wine trough alone, And from the peoples there was no man with Me. I also trod them in My anger And trampled them in My wrath; And their lifeblood is sprinkled on My garments, And I stained all My raiment. 4 "For the day of vengeance was in My heart, And My year of redemption has come. 5 "I looked, and there was no one to help, And I was astonished and there was no one to uphold; So My own arm brought salvation to Me, And My wrath upheld Me. 6 "I trod down the peoples in My anger And made them drunk in My wrath, And I poured out their lifeblood on the earth."

God's mercy is seen in His willingness to spare the city of Sodom if ten righteous individuals could be found there (Gen. 18:22-33). However, only one righteous man (Lot) dwelt in Sodom (2 Pet. 2:7-9), and the men of the city deeply resented his rebuke of their wicked conduct (Gen. 19:9). They were hardened beyond repentance or redemption (Isa. 3:9).

Genesis 18:22-33 (NASB95) — 22 Then the men turned away from there and went toward Sodom, while Abraham was still standing before the Lord. 23 Abraham came near and said, "Will You indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked? 24 "Suppose there are fifty righteous within the city; will You indeed sweep it away and not spare the place for the sake of the fifty righteous who are in it? 25 "Far be it from You to do such a thing, to slay the righteous with the wicked, so that the righteous and the wicked are treated alike. Far be it from You! Shall not the Judge of all the earth deal justly?" 26 So

the Lord said, "If I find in Sodom fifty righteous within the city, then I will spare the whole place on their account." 27 And Abraham replied, "Now behold, I have ventured to speak to the Lord, although I am but dust and ashes. 28 "Suppose the fifty righteous are lacking five, will You destroy the whole city because of five?" And He said, "I will not destroy it if I find forty-five there." 29 He spoke to Him yet again and said, "Suppose forty are found there?" And He said, "I will not do it on account of the forty." 30 Then he said, "Oh may the Lord not be angry, and I shall speak; suppose thirty are found there?" And He said, "I will not do it if I find thirty there." 31 And he said, "Now behold, I have ventured to speak to the Lord; suppose twenty are found there?" And He said, "I will not destroy it on account of the twenty." 32 Then he said, "Oh may the Lord not be angry, and I shall speak only this once; suppose ten are found there?" And He said, "I will not destroy it on account of the ten." 33 As soon as He had finished speaking to Abraham the Lord departed, and Abraham returned to his place.

2 Peter 2:7-9 (NASB95) — 7 and if He rescued righteous Lot, oppressed by the sensual conduct of unprincipled men 8 (for by what he saw and heard that righteous man, while living among them, felt his righteous soul tormented day after day by their lawless deeds), 9 then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment,

Isaiah 3:9 (NASB95) — 9 The expression of their faces bears witness against them, And they display their sin like Sodom; They do not even conceal it. Woe to them! For they have brought evil on themselves.

The Land of Canaan

In the days of Joshua, God's wrath was poured out on the inhabitants of Canaan (Lev. 18:24-30). However, His mercy is seen in the centuries long delay that occurred during the Patriarchal era and Israel's sojourn in Egypt (Gen. 15:12-16).

Leviticus 18:24-30 (NASB95) — 24 'Do not defile yourselves by any of these things; for by all these the nations which I am casting out before you have become defiled. 25 'For the land has become defiled, therefore I have brought its punishment upon it, so the land has spewed out its inhabitants. 26 'But as for you, you are to keep My statutes and My judgments and shall not do any of these abominations, neither the native, nor the alien who sojourns among you 27 (for the men of the land who have been before you have done all these abominations, and the land has become defiled); 28 so that the land will not spew you out, should you defile it, as it has spewed out the nation which has been before you. 29 'For whoever does any of these abominations, those persons who do so shall be cut off from among their people. 30 'Thus you are to keep My charge, that you do not practice any of the abominable customs which have been practiced before you, so as not to defile yourselves with them; I am the Lord your God.' "

Genesis 15:12-16 (NASB95) — 12 Now when the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell upon Abram; and behold, terror and great darkness fell upon him. 13 God said to Abram,

“Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed four hundred years. 14 “But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions. 15 “As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you will be buried at a good old age. 16 “Then in the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete.”

Leviticus 20:23 (NASB95) — 23 ‘Moreover, you shall not follow the customs of the nation which I will drive out before you, for they did all these things, and therefore I have abhorred them.

Deuteronomy 9:5 (NASB95) — 5 “It is not for your righteousness or for the uprightness of your heart that you are going to possess their land, but it is because of the wickedness of these nations that the Lord your God is driving them out before you, in order to confirm the oath which the Lord swore to your fathers, to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Deuteronomy 18:12 (NASB95) — 12 “For whoever does these things is detestable to the Lord; and because of these detestable things the Lord your God will drive them out before you.

The Roman Empire

Civil government is ordained of God for the purpose of punishing evil doers and blessing those who do good (Rom. 13:1-7; 1 Pet. 2:13-17).

Romans 13:1-7 (NASB95) — 1 Every person is to be in subjection to the governing authorities. For there is no authority except from God, and those which exist are established by God. 2 Therefore whoever resists authority has opposed the ordinance of God; and they who have opposed will receive condemnation upon themselves. 3 For rulers are not a cause of fear for good behavior, but for evil. Do you want to have no fear of authority? Do what is good and you will have praise from the same; 4 for it is a minister of God to you for good. But if you do what is evil, be afraid; for it does not bear the sword for nothing; for it is a minister of God, an avenger who brings wrath on the one who practices evil. 5 Therefore it is necessary to be in subjection, not only because of wrath, but also for conscience’ sake. 6 For because of this you also pay taxes, for rulers are servants of God, devoting themselves to this very thing. 7 Render to all what is due them: tax to whom tax is due; custom to whom custom; fear to whom fear; honor to whom honor.

1 Peter 2:13-17 (NASB95) — 13 Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake to every human institution, whether to a king as the one in authority, 14 or to governors as sent by him for the punishment of evildoers and the praise of those who do right. 15 For such is the will of God that by doing right you may silence the ignorance of foolish men. 16 Act as free men, and do not use your freedom as a covering for evil, but use it as bondslaves of God. 17 Honor all people, love the brotherhood, fear God, honor the king.

However, when these roles are reversed, nations face divine condemnation (Psa. 107:33-34; Prov. 14:34).

Psalm 107:33-34 (NASB95) — 33 He changes rivers into a wilderness And springs of water into a thirsty ground; 34 A fruitful land into a salt waste, Because of the wickedness of those who dwell in it.

Proverbs 14:34 (NASB95) — 34 Righteousness exalts a nation, But sin is a disgrace to any people.

The wrath of God is also poured out upon sin-sick societies, and corrupt governments that promote wickedness and persecute those who are faithful (Rev. 14:9-12, esp. vs. 10; 14:17-20, esp. vs. 19; 15:1, 7; 16:1).

*Revelation 14:9-12 (NASB95) — 9 Then another angel, a third one, followed them, saying with a loud voice, "If anyone worships the beast and his image, and receives a mark on his forehead or on his hand, 10 he also will drink of the wine of **the wrath of God**, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb. 11 "And the smoke of their torment goes up forever and ever; they have no rest day and night, those who worship the beast and his image, and whoever receives the mark of his name." 12 Here is the perseverance of the saints who keep the commandments of God and their faith in Jesus.*

*Revelation 14:10 (NASB95) — 10 he also will drink of the wine of **the wrath of God**, which is mixed in full strength in the cup of His anger; and he will be tormented with fire and brimstone in the presence of the holy angels and in the presence of the Lamb.*

*Revelation 14:17-20 (NASB95) — 17 And another angel came out of the temple which is in heaven, and he also had a sharp sickle. 18 Then another angel, the one who has power over fire, came out from the altar; and he called with a loud voice to him who had the sharp sickle, saying, "Put in your sharp sickle and gather the clusters from the vine of the earth, because her grapes are ripe." 19 So the angel swung his sickle to the earth and gathered the clusters from the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of **the wrath of God**. 20 And the wine press was trodden outside the city, and blood came out from the wine press, up to the horses' bridles, for a distance of two hundred miles.*

*Revelation 14:19 (NASB95) — 19 So the angel swung his sickle to the earth and gathered the clusters from the vine of the earth, and threw them into the great wine press of **the wrath of God**.*

*Revelation 15:1 (NASB95) — 1 Then I saw another sign in heaven, great and marvelous, seven angels who had seven plagues, which are the last, because in them **the wrath of God** is finished.*

*Revelation 15:7 (NASB95) — 7 Then one of the four living creatures gave to the seven angels seven golden bowls full of **the wrath of God**, who lives forever and ever.*

*Revelation 16:1 (NASB95) — 1 Then I heard a loud voice from the temple, saying to the seven angels, “Go and pour out on the earth the seven bowls of **the wrath of God**.”*

What is the destiny of a nation that provokes God’s anger? While sobered by recent events, and distressed that our nation is drifting further away from its Judeo-Christian heritage, faithful disciples will remember that God alone is supreme, and He is in control (Psa. 2). We love our nation, and well we should. God has blessed our nation. Yet, we should not assume that the United States of America is somehow exempt from the divine law of sowing and reaping, or that we will never face the wrath of God.

Psalm 2 (NASB95) — 1 Why are the nations in an uproar And the peoples devising a vain thing? 2 The kings of the earth take their stand And the rulers take counsel together Against the Lord and against His Anointed, saying, 3 “Let us tear their fetters apart And cast away their cords from us!” 4 He who sits in the heavens laughs, The Lord scoffs at them. 5 Then He will speak to them in His anger And terrify them in His fury, saying, 6 “But as for Me, I have installed My King Upon Zion, My holy mountain.” 7 “I will surely tell of the decree of the Lord: He said to Me, ‘You are My Son, Today I have begotten You. 8 ‘Ask of Me, and I will surely give the nations as Your inheritance, And the very ends of the earth as Your possession. 9 ‘You shall break them with a rod of iron, You shall shatter them like earthenware.’ “ 10 Now therefore, O kings, show discernment; Take warning, O judges of the earth. 11 Worship the Lord with reverence And rejoice with trembling. 12 Do homage to the Son, that He not become angry, and you perish in the way, For His wrath may soon be kindled. How blessed are all who take refuge in Him!

CONCLUSION

Remembering that we are sojourners, dwelling in a hostile environment, travelling through a world of sin and sadness, let us set our affections on things above (Col. 3:1-4), and look for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God (Heb. 11:8-10).

Colossians 3:1-4 (NASB95) — 1 Therefore if you have been raised up with Christ, keep seeking the things above, where Christ is, seated at the right hand of God. 2 Set your mind on the things above, not on the things that are on earth. 3 For you have died and your life is hidden with Christ in God. 4 When Christ, who is our life, is revealed, then you also will be revealed with Him in glory.

Hebrews 11:8-10 (NASB95) — 8 By faith Abraham, when he was called, obeyed by going out to a place which he was to receive for an inheritance; and he went out, not knowing where he was going. 9 By faith he lived as an alien in the land of promise, as in a foreign land, dwelling in tents with Isaac and Jacob, fellow heirs of the same promise; 10 for he was looking for the city which has foundations, whose architect and builder is God.

Remember that righteous people can cause God to delay or defer in His divine judgments (Gen. 18:32-33).

Genesis 18:32-33 (NASB95) — 32 Then he said, “Oh may the Lord not be angry, and I shall speak only this once; suppose ten are found there?” And He said, “I will not destroy it on account of the ten.” 33 As soon as He had finished speaking to Abraham the Lord departed, and Abraham returned to his place.

Living in a world of darkness, may our lights shine brightly (Matt. 4:12-17; 5:14-16; Phil. 2:14-16).

Matthew 4:12-17 (NASB95) — 12 Now when Jesus heard that John had been taken into custody, He withdrew into Galilee; 13 and leaving Nazareth, He came and settled in Capernaum, which is by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali. 14 This was to fulfill what was spoken through Isaiah the prophet: 15 “The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, By the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles— 16 “The people who were sitting in darkness saw a great Light, And those who were sitting in the land and shadow of death, Upon them a Light dawned.” 17 From that time Jesus began to preach and say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

Matthew 5:14-16 (NASB95) — 14 “You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden; 15 nor does anyone light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on the lampstand, and it gives light to all who are in the house. 16 “Let your light shine before men in such a way that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father who is in heaven.

Philippians 2:14-16 (NASB95) — 14 Do all things without grumbling or disputing; 15 so that you will prove yourselves to be blameless and innocent, children of God above reproach in the midst of a crooked and perverse generation, among whom you appear as lights in the world, 16 holding fast the word of life, so that in the day of Christ I will have reason to glory because I did not run in vain nor toil in vain.

Let us be faithful in the face of opposition, persecution, and even death (Rev. 2:10).

Revelation 2:10 (NASB95) — 10 ‘Do not fear what you are about to suffer. Behold, the devil is about to cast some of you into prison, so that you will be tested, and you will have tribulation for ten days. Be faithful until death, and I will give you the crown of life.

Remember that the promise of salvation is offered to all who respond in obedience to the gospel (Rom. 5:6-11, esp. vs. 9).

Romans 5:6-11 (NASB95) — 6 For while we were still helpless, at the right time Christ died for the ungodly. 7 For one will hardly die for a righteous man; though perhaps for the good man someone would dare even to die. 8 But God demonstrates His own love toward us, in that while we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. 9 Much more then,

*having now been justified by His blood, we shall be saved from **the wrath of God** through Him. 10 For if while we were enemies we were reconciled to God through the death of His Son, much more, having been reconciled, we shall be saved by His life. 11 And not only this, but we also exult in God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom we have now received the reconciliation.*

Therefore, let us not test God, as did Israel of old, but avail ourselves of His grace and goodness, while there is time and opportunity (Heb. 3:7-11; 4:1-3).

Hebrews 3:7-11 (NASB95) — 7 Therefore, just as the Holy Spirit says, “Today if you hear His voice, 8 Do not harden your hearts as when they provoked Me, As in the day of trial in the wilderness, 9 Where your fathers tried Me by testing Me, And saw My works for forty years. 10 “Therefore I was angry with this generation, And said, ‘They always go astray in their heart, And they did not know My ways’; 11 As I swore in My wrath, ‘They shall not enter My rest.’ “

Hebrews 4:1-3 (NASB95) — 1 Therefore, let us fear if, while a promise remains of entering His rest, any one of you may seem to have come short of it. 2 For indeed we have had good news preached to us, just as they also; but the word they heard did not profit them, because it was not united by faith in those who heard. 3 For we who have believed enter that rest, just as He has said, “As I swore in My wrath, They shall not enter My rest,” although His works were finished from the foundation of the world.